

ease or some other form of dementia; her homosexual brother Antonio and his lover Esteban; her nine-year old son Borja who seems prone to bizarre behavior and prolonged periods of isolation in the mansion's chapel; her absent ex-husband Rafael Murillo; Lola Porcel, the old family maid whose senility annoys everyone, including her counterpart Julia, the younger maid; and the list goes on, with each one bearing some sort of metonymically identifiable I.D. tag. Tying all of these voices together is that of the manicurist, Cigala, whose comically astute colloquial renderings of people, places and things in the community not only fill many gaps in the story, but also intensify everyone's—including the reader's—curiosity by means of the juicy gossip that is spread at the hands of this facetious professional.

To all of this is added a series of fictive binary-character oppositions that exilirate the humdrum realities of human existence: Amalia and Marivá, the madam who will soon profane Montecarmelo by turning it into a house of prostitution whose proximity to the American base at Rota is no coincidence; Julia and Lola Porcel; Amalia and her brother Antonio who has left her by herself to handle all of the family matters; and, of course, the pitted rivalry between Amalia and Marcos. Everything boils down to the in's and out's of a typical—dysfunctional—family as recalled by Amalia while she sits and awaits Julia's announcement that Marcos has arrived for the final transaction: to write out the check for everything in the house, including the infamous painting of the Nativity. Amidst the cries, whispers, echoes, gossip and secrets that we—think we—hear emanating from a family that is the total opposite of the holy family of the coveted Nativity setting, should it really surprise us to hear the narrator say that the conversation between Marcos and Amalia «is orphaned of any peculiar sonority whatsoever» (104)?

The University of South Carolina

LUCILE C. CHARLEBOIS

Alfonso Costafreda. *Poesía completa*. Ed. Jordi Jové y Pere Rovira. Barcelona, Tusquets, 1990, 364 pp.

This much needed edition, which includes all of the work published during Costafreda's lifetime as well as the posthumous *Sui-*

cidios y otras muertes (1974), is designed to re-establish the reputation of this relatively unknown poet of the generation of the 1950s. Pere Rovira, in a brief critical introduction, claims that Alfonso Costafreda (1925-1974) is «uno de los poetas más importantes de su generación y tal vez el más ignorado de ellos» (9). In 1949, the date of publication of his first book, *Nuestra elegía*, he must have been one of the most promising voices among the younger Spanish poets. He remained silent during the 1950s, however, and did not publish a second book until 1966 (*Compañera de hoy*). His suicide in 1974 cut short a literary career that never lived up to his own expectations or those of his poet friends. Before the publication of this new edition, his poetry had been out of print for several years. Tusquets Editores is to be commended for this attractive edition of Costafreda's complete poetry, which includes a brief prologue and a moving memoir of the poet by Vicente Aleixandre.

The frustration of Costafreda's early promise is a theme that appears frequently in his poetry, as well as in the testimony of his contemporaries:

Pienso en mis límites,
límites que separan
el poema que hago
del que no puedo hacer,
el poema que escribo
del que nunca podré escribir. (103)

Jaime Gil de Biedma, in a statement quoted in the introduction, speaks of his admiration for his friend's poetic vocation, but qualifies his praise in an important way: «Alfonso Costafreda, que apostó toda su vida a una sola carta: ser poeta. Y que, cuando descubrió —como a todos nos ha ocurrido— que nunca sería el gran poeta que había soñado, no quiso ser, ni aparentar, ninguna otra cosa» (10). Many critics would dispute Gil de Biedma's parenthetical disclaimer («como a todos nos ha ocurrido») arguing that poets such as Gil de Biedma himself, Claudio Rodríguez, or José Ángel Valente are significant poets in ways that Costafreda is not. Rovira's emphasis on the frustration of his career ultimately undercuts the contention that he is one of the more important members of this group.

The major preoccupations of Costafreda's work will be familiar to those who have read the major poets of his generation. He is concerned both with the poet's social role and with the insufficiency of poetic language. His work resembles that of José Angel Valente both stylistically and thematically: he eschews ornamentation, writing in an austere minimalist dialect:

Apuntes de una vida, indicios
de otra, si alguien me lee acaso
en este espejo torpe
verá su propio rostro. (303)

It is unfair to call this a derivative style, however, since the influence probably flowed in both directions at once: Valente and Costafreda admired each other's work a great deal and were working along similar lines during the last years of the latter's life.

Costafreda's most interesting book is *Suicidios y otras muertes*, a work in which he self-consciously pays homage to previous literary suicides including Gabriel Ferrater, Hart Crane, Paul Celan, John Berryman, and Sylvia Plath, immediately before joining their ranks. His translations of a Berryman poem and of a fragment of another by Plath are lively and adept. In his own work, however, he tends to avoid the kind of overt self-exposure that is typical of these North-American poets of the «Confessional» school. His anguish is apparent, but he is circumspect in revealing intimate details.

The Ohio State University

JONATHAN MAYHEW